

MORE THAN PASSION AND INTRIGUE

Revelation 1:4b-8

November 25, 2018

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Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty. Good morning church! What a joy it is to be with you once again as we worship the one in our lives who is sovereign and lord. We claim in thanksgiving that the one who created us continues to nurture us and seeks to be in relationship with us. I pray that you've found some rest in the past few days and have found a good balance between your day of giving thanks and a hunger to get stuff done in preparation for Christmas.

Our family had a wonderful opportunity to be with family this weekend. We traveled to North Carolina to spend thanksgiving with my sister and family who were recently transferred there for work. It certainly is good to be worshipping with you this morning.

Won't you join me in prayer?

Almighty and gracious Lord, we are so grateful for the opportunity to come and worship you as our Lord and savior. We pray that just for a moment, we might settle back to hear from you and to grow in our relationship with you. You truly have a desire to be among us and in relationship, and so we pray that we would be more available and less frenetic. Center us, dear Lord, for your word brings life and offers us a glimpse of your future in Jesus Christ. Bless us we pray, in the power of Jesus. Amen.

I wonder how many of you have been as engrossed in the Netflix series, *The Crown*, as I have. After enjoying the first two seasons that follow the first two decades of Queen Elizabeth's reign in Great Britain, I am eagerly anticipating season three and a new cast. Season three, we are told will continue to unfold the complicated story of Queen Elisabeth - the longest reigning monarch in English history.

I was drawn to *The Crown* not only for its story, but because of my love of history. I have always had a deep passion for history, particularly for the history of much of my genealogy and family history. My father's mother was born in England and was very young when she emigrated to the United States. That love of history also leads me to a deep interest in the monarchy, particularly as it relates to England and the entirety of the UK.

In my role as part of the annual conference before coming to Ingomar, I had the opportunity to travel to England on a number of occasions and I have to tell you that simply peaked my interest even more. Humbled and amazed probably doesn't describe how awesome it is to be in a place like England. The history alone is untapped by my own study and touring. I have often walked the streets and remarked that some of the buildings are older than our own country and their sense of history and preservation is unmatched in the world.

While there in England, much of our time in England was spent walking in the footsteps of John Wesley. It was often on off-days that we are able to couple that historic walk with some significant historic sites such as Westminster Abby and even Windsor Castle.

For me - a tour in the footsteps of Wesley is also a walk among Kings. Some of the most significant narratives of the church are directly influenced by the monarch, particularly our side of the protestant church we call methodism.

Take for example the anglican church. If it were not for the whims of King Henry the VIII, we may not have the anglican church that we understand today, nor would we have the birth of the Methodist Movement that we experience through Wesley.

The reign of the monarchs even in England bring with it a whole other side of complicated history. Something that we might take for granted such as land ownership was often influenced by the king. Power was more about subjectivity and fear.

A king by historical accounts has a divine authority and a sovereignty over his subjects. Some would call it absolute, but a sovereign rules over all and has dominion and control that is ultimate and supreme.

For all that a King represents from an historical perspective and all the baggage that it carries, our understanding of one who is King and Lord in our own lives as people of faith can become complicated.

Today is the last Sunday in the church calendar and the last Sunday in the season of pentacost. More than just being an end to the calendar year, it is Christ the King Sunday and we remember in faith the reign of God in our lives not only today, but in the culmination of our own story of faith. We claim in Christ the King, that Jesus will reign as sovereign and king when God brings the fullness of his realm on earth.

I happen to have a deep love of this time of year, because for so many of us, we are anticipating the coming of Christmas. And it is in this tension between what we remember on this last Sunday of November and what we want to celebrate in the birth of Christ. But that tension is not that far from one another. For today, we are remembering and anticipating the coming of Christ and his final reign in much the same way that we are anticipating the coming of Christ as a baby.

There is this holy tension for us in the church. The end and the beginning. We are so ready for the coming of Jesus, but we are also anticipating his coming in Glory.

Jesus even laid claim to those very words, beginning and end. We are reminded of this in the scripture today about that tension, Jesus said, I and the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, the one who is and who was and who is to come. Jesus Messiah is coming, not only as a child but also in the description of a benevolent savior and king.

The entirety of history is also wrapped up in that very statement in revelation. "I am". I am the alpha and omega - it reminds us of the perpetual name of God. It reminds us of when Moses

asked God who he was to say sent him? God said to Moses - tell them "I am" sent you. it is that name of God our king that has dominion from generation to generation. When Jesus says, I am - the Alpha and Omega - he is claiming that divine name with God.

Today we read from the book of revelation. And for as complicated that the entire book may be, it offers us not some dooms day approach to our view and outlook on the future in Christ, but a full breadth and understanding of our future in Christ. It is an unveiling and a full disclosure for us and for all believers of what God intends for all of us.

Not only is the book of revelation is an unveiling and a full disclosure of God's conclusion in history, but it is also a reminder that in the Kingdom of God - our Lord will bring to completion all that he has been promising to us. The coming of the Crucified King will be for us an opportunity to fall to our knees in worship to the one who doesn't just seek allegiance with our lips but also desires to be in relationship with us.

For all that we understand a king to be, the reign of Christ as Crucified King will be so much different. The reign of Christ in our lives is God's demonstration of three very simple things.

The first demonstration of the **Jesus reign in our lives is that he loves us**. John reminds us very early in today's passage of God's love for us in Jesus. It sets us firmly in the place of relationship and reminds us of all that God has done for us in Christ. As much as the revelation is a foreshadowing of the reign of Christ - it is a reminder of why he came in the first place.

John 3:16 is that simple reminder "God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. Further, God did not send his son into the world so that the world would know his wrath, but so that the world might come to be saved through him.

And more than that, Jesus did everything in his power to not only show but express it. Jesus love for us is *love beyond words*. it is expressed and acted out in his death on a cross.

Deep love. I think all of us know what it's like to have a deep love for something that moves beyond sentimental love, but deeply within our souls. Parents who love deeply would do anything to see their children well. They will go to any lengths to see that they are cared for. Deep love is expressed in Sons and daughters who agonize over very painful decisions about parent's care and end of life decisions. I have seen tears shed over those deep longing and decisions. A deep passionate love is often expressed in the tears shed in acts of devotion during weddings.

Deep emotional love is what is expressed for us. Jesus loves us that much. He loves us so much that he was willing to take it all for you and me. He sheds the same tears that he shed for his friend Lazarus as he agonized over his own sacrifice and death on the cross. Jesus reign is a demonstration of his very deep love for us.

Jesus reign and second coming as crucified king also demonstrates that he frees us. In the fifth verse this morning, we read not only about his love for us, but that he freed us from our sins by his blood.

Remember, the crucified King comes as a demonstration that he has power and ultimate authority over EVERYTHING! He is the one in control and has the power to free us from the very things that keep us captive in sin.

You and I know it's true. We are held captive by so much and I could go down a list of the things that have our allegiances. We are subject to the powers of this world so much that it has the power to influence us more than the Word of Jesus does. We are so subject and controlled by this world that our decisions about what we do and what we say are and even where we spend out money are under control. Subtle and not so subtle messages influence us and control our decision making without even knowing it. That's true captivity.

Take for example Black Friday. The message that you probably received was that if you don't go after that sale on Friday and sacrifice all that you are - you will never see another sale like it ever again. And many of you did! You sacrificed everything to get out there and shop. Everyday - we are subject to messages that influence us.

The message of this final disclosure in Christ is that Jesus Frees us not only from sin and death, but also has the power to free us from the things of this world that hold sway in our lives. Jesus frees us from captivity. And it all goes back to him loving us that much that he was willing to do it on the cross.

And finally - **the reign of God and the coming of Christ is a demonstration that Jesus is calling us to serve as the priesthood of all believers.**

Let me share that verse again with you as a reminder. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father - to him be all power and glory for ever and ever.

When Jesus comes in final glory, we are going to be called into that ultimate freedom and called to serve in the priesthood of all believers.

I love this verse - because it takes us back to the very beginning and reminds us that while the whole earth is God's - he sees us as treasured and beloved.

Exodus 19:5-6 says, "now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant then out of all nations you will be treasured possessions. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

When Jesus comes again, we will live into that freedom and live as the ones that he has called us to be. Our service will not be as one subject to a king because of fear or power, but because we are called to serve along side Christ as a royal priesthood. Remember - Jesus doesn't seek for us to have an allegiance only with our lips but as ones who are in deep relationship with him.

In Jesus kingdom both now and in the future, we are set apart, chosen and holy, and Jesus seeks to include us in his work and ministry in the world. We are channels of God's grace in the world and to all the nations - not just in the future, but right now. We are individually and collectively set apart to be holy when Christ is revealed.

I know that our understanding and our appreciation for the Kings and Queens of this earthly realm tend to complicate our understanding of Jesus as Lord - but its with great anticipation of all that Christ gives to us and does for us that we can call him Lord and King today. If there is one message that we can take with us into this week and even into this season of Advent in teh coming days, is that Jesus loves us, he frees us and seeks to be in service with you, not just sovereign over you. Relationship with Jesus is more than some simple historical curiosity - its more than just passion and intrigue.

Life with Jesus is life changing and life altering. Life with Jesus is just different.

In anticipation of Jesus reign as King. So be it, and amen.

Think about your next steps of faith this morning and on your connect card - maybe you will be someone who invites another person to worship sometime this month. Your simple invitation to worship may be the invitation into relationship that they need. Maybe you will share your personal story about how your relationship with Jesus has set you free. And finally, may you will want to enter into a deliberate act of service this month individuals or as a family. Pray about those things this day - and ultimately remember that you are loved.